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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- * Secretary-General in message on World Water Day urges international community to act to avert impending water supply catastrophe.
- * Secretary-General concludes visit to France; speaks on role of United Nations and democratic values.
- * UN staff members kidnapped in Somalia freed.
- * International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia indicts four for crimes against Bosnian Serb victims.
- * UNHCR issues \$30 million appeal for repatriation programme for Angola.
- * Peace in regions affected by genocide brings complex challenges - UNHCR tells Human Rights Panel.
- * UN video wins three major international awards.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has urged all providers and users of water to act together to avert an impending catastrophe in water supply. In a message marking World Water Day being observed today, the Secretary-General exhorted the international community to exercise its rights and responsibilities to provide water for rich and poor alike, for all competing users, equitably, reliably and affordably.

Dr. Boutros-Ghali said rapid population growth, urbanization and increasing urban poverty have made the goal of water for all seemingly unattainable, particularly in developing countries. He said despite warnings of an impending water crisis, the political will and commitment to tackle and solve this crisis is yet to be demonstrated. The Secretary-General reminded recipient nations of the need to put in place policies to ensure more sustainable water resources management.

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This year, World Water Day has a special focus: Water for Thirsty Cities. In a message on the Day, James Gustave Speth, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said this was fitting, in conjunction with the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) or the "City Summit," in Istanbul this June. He said several fundamental issues relating to water must be addressed at Istanbul - among them, equitable distribution, financing, wastage and partnerships.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali this morning held discussions with French Prime Minister Alain Juppe. A United Nations Spokesman said they had an extensive tour d'horizon of a number of issues. In the afternoon, the Secretary-General went to the University of Bordeaux, where he received an honorary doctorate. In a speech concentrating on the major challenges facing the international community of tomorrow, he spoke about the role of the United Nations and the role that democratic values can play, emphasizing the democratic imperative and the international law of democracy.

Also in Paris, the Secretary-General met with French Foreign Minister Evid Charette during which they reviewed the financial crisis of the United Nations and UN reform. They discussed the agenda of the "G-7" summit due to be held in Lyons at the end of June to which the Secretary-General has been invited as an observer. They also discussed the question of negotiations with Iraq on the oil-for-food formula expressed in resolution 986. They reviewed the situation of Yemen and Eritrea, the question of the fight against international terrorism.

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In Somalia, the five United Nations staff members who were taken hostage in Mogadishu have been released. A UN Spokesman said they were released after local villagers on hearing the news of the kidnapping, intercepted and shot at the kidnappers before apprehending them. The hostages were released early Friday morning by the villagers, and are unharmed.

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The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has announced the indictment of four alleged perpetrators of crimes against Bosnian Serb victims. A communique issued by the Tribunal says the indictment arises out of the operation of a detention facility known as the Celebici camp in Central Bosnia-herzegovina. UN Spokesman Ahmad Fawzi said today the indictment refers to events which took place in that camp during 1992. The detainees were Bosnian Serbs from the Konjic area who were subjected to serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The Prosecutor of the International Tribunal stressed that this illustrated the even-handed policy repeatedly stated by Mr. Goldstone,

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namely "to investigate and prosecute persons who may be responsible for crimes irrespective of the political or ethnic group to which they belong." The investigations are evidence-driven and information from all informed sources about all crimes and all persons who may be responsible is welcome, the communique said.

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Participants in the all inclusive intra-East Timorese talks have confirmed the importance of continuing the talks between the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the Secretary-General. In a declaration adopted by consensus after the conclusion of the talks in Stadt Schlaining, Austria, they expressed the hope of finding a just, comprehensive and internationally accepted solution to the question of East Timor.

Facilitated by the United Nations, the intra-East Timorese dialogue served to explore practical ideas that could have positive impact on the situation in East Timor and assist in creating a conducive atmosphere for a resolution of that question. 29 East Timorese, representing a broad cross-section of political opinion from inside and outside the Territory participated in the talks.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has appealed for over \$30 million for its repatriation programme this year for some 300,000 Angolan refugees. The \$30 million needed this year will cover the cost of transportation, provision of water, sanitation, health, shelter and education facilities in areas where the refugees are likely to go back and repair roads and bridges.

Since the signing of the peace accord in November 1994, more than 14,000 Angolan refugees have returned spontaneously to their country. The return movement is expected to gain momentum once significant progress is achieved in the demobilization of troops and clearance of landmines on major routes.

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The most critical human rights test in Bosnia and Herzegovina currently involves the freedom of movement, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, has told the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. She said despite formal assurances of the right of freedom of movement in the former Yugoslavia, the recent exodus of ethnic Serbs from Sarajevo and the burning and looting of suburban neighbourhoods, left her concerned that political blockages still in place would prove to be at least as powerful as the roadblocks which separated the communities during the year.

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"A Place to Stand" - the recently released video produced by the United Nations Department of Public Information for the 50th Anniversary of the UN has won three major awards in International competition. It won the coveted Golden Eagle CINE Award and the Telly award. It also won a World Silver Medal in the Broadcast category of the prestigious New York Festivals. "Portraits of Age", a popular UN video, won a finalist certificate in the New York Festivals in the Broadcast category.

In all three competitions, "A Place to Stand" was chosen from among several thousand entrants from around the world. Its television premiere in the United States was on the Arts and Entertainment History Channel and has been shown on television in several other countries.

Over the years, United Nations films and videos have won numerous international awards, ranging from an Oscar to the coveted Palm d'Or award.
